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ABSTRACT

This publication is the complete transcript of a weekly radio program devoted to contemporary issues in American education. This particular program focuses on the topic of homosexual teachers. Throughout the program, a number of educators and authorities on homosexuality present their views on various legal, political, moral, and educational issues involving gay teachers. Included are remarks by a number of anonymous gay teachers, as well as by the following individuals: Dr. Herbert Hendin, author of "The Age of Sensation"; Lyn Rosen, a gay teacher; Joel Gewirtz, staff counsel for the National Education Association; Tom Amiano, of the Gay Teachers' Union; Dr. Frank Kameny, gay rights activist; and Rev. Randall Gibson, codirector of a gay coffee house. (JG)

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INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

TRANSCRIPT FOR PROGRAM SCHEDULED FOR BROADCAST

THE WEEK OF APRIL 19, 1976

National Public Radio

Options in Education

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OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is an electronic weekly magazine devoted to coverage of news, features, policy & people in the field of education. The program is available for broadcast to the 181 member stations of National Public Radio.

The Executive Producer is John Merrow. The Producer is Midge Hart. The Associate Producer is Jo Ellyn Rackleff, and the Co-Host is Wendy Blair.

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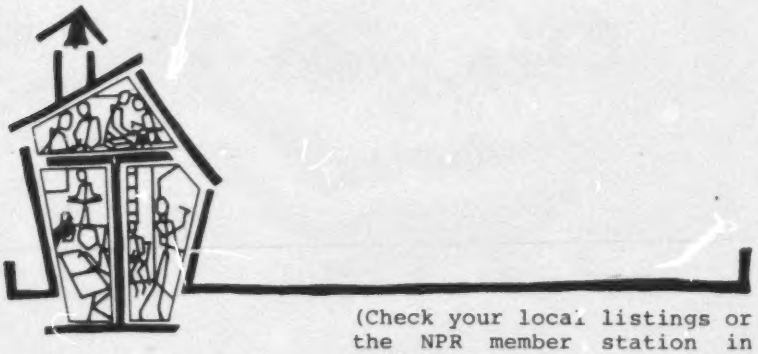

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(OPENING MUSICAL THEME)

BLAIR: I'm Wendy Blair with NPR's OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a news magazine about all the issues and developments in education -- from the ABC's of primary education to the alphabet soup of government programs. If you've ever been to school, we have something that will interest you.

PAT & GLADYS: When you're 16, boy, that's all there is - is sexuality. Everywhere! Fair game. Everybody's fair game.

And I had crushes on everybody, you know. One funny thing happened to me -- I went back to my 8th grade a few years after I'd had a crush on this teacher, and I took one look at her, and I said, "Wow, how could I have had a crush on that person? You know, she was mean." But at the time, she was somebody in my life that was teaching me things to know, and, you know, it was very important.

MERROW: This is John Merrow. The adolescent crush is a part of growing up, but what if the teacher is a homosexual? What if the child is a homosexual - or uncertain about his or her sexuality? There are homosexuals in the schools - teachers and students - probably in the same proportion as in the population at large - that is, 4% or 10% (depending upon which statistic from the Kinsey Report you choose to accept.

Pat and Gladys, whom you just heard, are lesbians. They were teachers and they now work with the YWCA. Warren has taught on the East and West Coasts. He explains how he keeps his sexual feelings in check while in the classroom.

WARREN: I don't know of any teacher who doesn't have any sexual feelings toward the students. I think that a leaning situation is a very sensual situation - or can be. Gay & Straight. Like any teacher, you try not to let it get in the way, but you try to turn it into other types of expression.

I have a young woman student now who has a crush on me, and that, in some ways, is a harder kind of thing to deal with than a young man. She's reading more. She's doing more for the class, and I think it's a really positive thing. And, for her, she's coming out as a heterosexual -- and I think that's a very positive thing for her. I also teach "Sex Education" - and I try to show all perspectives. The thing I'm trying to show, if nothing else, is that there are many ways of sexual expression -- one being the marriage situation between a man and a woman, but there's a whole myriad of other types of expression which I would like them to know and to understand. If they're going to take advantage of them, fine. And, if not, at least they'll have the knowledge.

So that if they do come across a gay student, sometime in their life, they'll have a better understanding, and won't be as fearful or as uptight of that person.

MERROW: Sex Education, itself, is controversial, but gay teachers teaching sex education brings up another issue. Doesn't society have a stake in heterosexuality and the family? Dr. Herbert Hendin, the author of "The Age of Sensation" says, "yes".

HENDIN: If there has been no reason to object to him any other way, and someone discovers that Teacher A or B is homosexual, I see no reason to get involved in that. I think you're dealing with a different thing when you're dealing with those people who want to be hired and to be known and identified as homosexual. Job protection is one thing. The right to advocate or proselytize or put forward a life style is another thing.

Many of the people who are trying to make a civil right out of sexual preference are people who want that right. They want the right to teach homosexual sex education -- not just simply announce that they're homosexual. They want the right to have sex education classes in homosexuality on the same basis as the schools have sex education classes in heterosexuality, and the derivative of that right would be they want the right to marry or adopt children.

Now, when you start putting those issues together, what you're really dealing with is the fact that every society has always had a stake in raising its children in a heterosexual way. They want children who will not only care for the opposite sex, but, hopefully, go on to form families and have children of their own. And society has a stake in that.

Now, you have to understand - if any society functions well, it shouldn't get uptight about the fact that even if you have that as a goal, a certain number of people don't meet your goals whatever they are. There's no reason to be hysterical about the fact that not everybody lives in that framework. But that's a very different thing than saying that you have to institutionalize all these alternatives because people do that.

MERROW: We'll hear more from Dr. Hendin later in the program. But most homosexual teachers do not teach sex education. Few homosexual teachers are found after school arguing in public that "Gay is Good".

Tell me what just happened, but just be careful not to use any names.

STUDENT: Okay. I'm a waiter in a meeting house, and I was waiting on tables and stuff. I turn around and I see one of my teachers, from my high school. So, I looked at him for about five minutes, and this is in a gay coffee shop - so, you know, everybody tries to keep it cool and everything. So, I went up to him and said - "Aren't you my teacher?" And he said, "No." "Don't you teach at this high school?" And he said, "No." And it just kind of flipped me out, and I just thought - "Well, maybe he just looks like my teacher." And I had a friend sitting right next to him - so, he got up and left, and he lied to me.

MERROW: Why did he lie?

STUDENT: Probably to protect himself from the school system because the school system would have got at him. Once they find out that a teacher is gay, parents and the school system get upset and think he's making it with other kids in the school.

MERROW: Does it happen with another friend of yours, the gay girl?

STUDENT: She lives right down the street from a gay bar, and she was out walking her dog, and she saw him walk by, the same teacher, but he said that he wasn't going down to the gay bar - even though he was standing right in front of it. And there's nothing he can do about it either.

If he came out in the high school, he'd get fired. It's happened.

MERROW: As that 17-year old said, most gay teachers have to live private lives -- keeping or trying to keep their sexuality a secret from all but a close circle of friends. They're in the "closet" as the expression goes. Lyn Rosen was married when she began teaching in college.

LYN ROSEN: The woman that I shared an office with the first year showed up later at a gay meeting in Philadelphia. We shared an office for a year, and we never spoke to each other on a personal level - hardly spoke at all. But, you see, when you don't come face-to-face with your sexuality, people that share it become frightening. I'm sure she was as scared of me as I was of her. But you don't know why, you see. And, then, when you say - "Oh, gay, feeling, sexual" - of course, then it becomes very easy to deal with people of your same sex. And also people of the opposite sex.

MERROW: How did you deal with your own feelings toward your students?

LYN ROSEN: Well, I guess the same way heterosexual people do. Probably, the homosexual teacher of either sex has more self-control consciously over his or her sexual feelings towards a student - for the very reason that it is so frowned upon by society. I would think that the heterosexual teacher has so much less repression from society telling him or her not to have those feelings that they would be more likely to act on it.

And it's really difficult because young women - say, the young women that I teach - think nothing of dropping into your apartment, you know. Their parents think it's all right. There is - when you get into the homosexual atmosphere, it's very hard for a gay teacher to protect him or herself from their students just dropping in - well, because we're the same sex actually. Obviously, nobody thinks anything's going on. And it's hard to keep them out.

MERROW: Still, let's deal with the popular perception of what it would mean to have a gay teacher teaching my kids - I mean, in the sense of, you know, is that teacher going to be up there lusting after my kindergarten kid?

LYN ROSEN: I'm not a straight person. I can't imagine what their fears are. It's better for the kids if it's out in the open because the homosexual child - and people don't believe they exist - but I work with them, and they do exist, and they all tell me that they were gay from the time they were nine, and they'll swear to it.

The homosexual child would have a good role model, and not feel guilty. And the homosexual child's development would be served by having out homosexual teachers.

MERROW: Can you imagine a school system openly hiring homosexual teachers, though?

LYN ROSEN: Yes, definitely. I think they openly hire them now, and just pretend that they haven't noticed.

When you work with teachers and you work together all day, it's pretty hard to hide your sexual orientation. You can play "Monday morning pronouns", which is the gay game . . . You don't know what "Monday morning pronouns" are? That's when you come in and you say, "I went out with a wonderful man last night." Except that you actually went out with a wonderful woman, if you are a woman, and you just change the gender. They call that "Monday morning pronouns". And you can "Monday morning pronoun" your way through, but there comes some point. I mean, if you've ever been in a Teacher Staff Room, you know, where they have coffee and stuff, they know who the teachers are who are gay, and they're not about to give up a damn good teacher for something they know takes place in somebody's bedroom far away from their school.

MERROW: Legally, a teacher probably couldn't be fired for declaring publicly that he or she is gay. But Joseph Acanfora did not lose his teaching job in Maryland until he "came out of the closet". The National Education Association spent over $50,000 trying to get his job back, and defending Acanfora's right to teach. Joel Gerwirtz is staff counsel for the NEA.

GEWIRTZ: The position is just a logical extension of our position with respect to the rights of our members in general, the rights of teachers, that whatever their private life -- whether they're accused of what would be called immorality, in the large sense, whether it be homosexual or heterosexual misbehavior as that might be seen by certain individuals in the community -- self-styled censors, if you will - or whether the teacher is engaged in some unpopular political cause. Again, to the extent that any of these activities are private and concern the teacher as a human being, they are irrelevant. He is hired as a teacher to teach in the schools, and if he is doing that job adequately, that is the sole concern of the school board.

MERROW: What about the homosexual teacher whose private life is, in fact, somewhat public? For example, he belongs to a Gay Liberation Movement, or does counseling at the local church with gay kids, but not on the school grounds?

GEWIRTZ: Okay. Now, by private life, I didn't mean something that simply was secret. I meant private life as distinguished from professional life which relates to his classroom performance. Again, the fact that he may be known as a member of this organization, or even a spokesman or officer, all this is irrelevant to the extent so long as he's performing his classroom work adequately, competently, and his private life doesn't involve itself in any way in the classroom.

MERROW: But Acanfora lost his case?

GEWIRTZ: I can briefly go through the issues on that because there were several different ones, and it changed. Initially, when it was discovered that he was homosexual, he was transferred from the classroom to an admistrative position. He went to court and claimed that the transfer was unconstitutional, and the court agreed that he should not have been transferred solely by virtue of him being a homosexual.

The court went off on a tangent, however, and said that since Joe Acanfora had gone on radio and television and publicized his dispute with the school board, he had made the issue as public as it was. And had created the outcry in the community to the extent that it existed.

We appealed that decision and the Court of Appeals agreed with us that the fact that it was a public issue, and the fact that Acanfora had exercised his First Amendment rights to speak out about it, were irrelevant considerations. The way the Court of Appeals decided the case was based on the fact that Acanfora had allegedly failed to write on his employment application under extracurricular activities the name of the group to which he belonged in college, which would have immediately branded him as a gay teacher.

MERROW: Acanfora lost the case, but, as some gay people say, he won the case for the rest of the gays.

GEWIRTZ: Yes. The law resulting from the District Court opinion is that homosexuality is not a basis for terminating a teacher or transferring a teacher.

MERROW: If he had filled out that form completely and said, "Oh, yes. I belong to the Gay such-and-such," would he have gotten the job?

GEWIRTZ: The witnesses for the Montgomery County School Board indicated that they would not have hired someone who they knew to be gay. Montgomery County also at that time was turning down nine out of every ten applicants for positions. According to the logic of the courts, Joe would have had to write down on the application that he was a member of Homophiles of Penn State, and, therefore, let it be known that he was gay. He would not have been hired as a result of that, and his legal remedy then would have been to challenge the failure to hire him on the basis that it was unconstitutional because it discriminated against him as a homosexual.

In fact, that would have been an impossible thing to prove since nine out of ten people already were being turned down. And, presumably, with all due respect, the School Board would not have admitted that that was the reason.

MERROW: Joel Gewirtz, the National Education Association's chief lawyer. The other teacher union, the American Federation of Teachers, also supports the rights of gay teachers -- although not as vigorously.

JACK: There are an awful lot of gay teachers, and if some "get away with it", nothing happening, then others may be prompted to come out too, and it may freak the school systems out to find out how many gay teachers there are.

MERROW: But gay teachers go public at their peril. Jack used to teach fourth grade. He explains what happened when his principal discovered that he was gay.

JACK: Yeah, I resigned voluntarily, but there was a lot of pressure beforehand. The principal and I had many discussions after school. She never once mentioned homosexuality - or sexuality for that matter - at all, but she'd make comments that she knew things about me that I didn't think she knew, and I made the comment to her, "You know, you sound like my mother?" And she laughed, and she said, "Yeah. In a lot of ways I feel like your mother. I have to protect you." And so on. She'd come into the classroom checking - something that she didn't use to do, and all of a sudden, for several months she'd just be standing at the back of the room, watching, seeing what was going on, and then leaving.

MERROW: What was she checking for?

JACK: Well, I think she was checking to see what was going on, if I was spending too much time in the cloakroom with the kids, molesting them, or whatever. I mean, that's the only thing I could think of.

The funny part about the whole thing was -- I was a 4th grade teacher. She had so much respect for me as a teacher and as a person that she asked me to take my same class into the 5th grade and work with them another year. And she told me that she'd only done that once before in her career as a principal, and that was her sign of what she thought of me as a teacher and my capabilities. And it was the year after - after she'd had all of these glowing reports - that she did an about face when she found out that I was gay, and that's when she started watching to see if I was doing anything extraordinary or out of the ordinary. But with kids 9 or 10 years old, it's a very touchy subject.

TEACHER: Okay. Charmin says there's no way we can get it back. John?

JOHN: You may be freezing, and you might get it back.

MERROW: The fear that homosexual teachers will molest little children unquestionably motivates many administrators and parents. But, in fact, almost all the cases of sexual abuse of children involve adult men and under-aged girls. And according to a new book, "The Physical and Sexual Abuse of Children" by David Walters, "The sexual abuser, in the vast majority of instances, is well known to the child. He is usually a relative -- such as a father, a brother-in-law, or an uncle, or a family friend or neighbor." Walters goes on to say that those most revolted by sexual abuse are homosexuals themselves, who rightly feel that public acceptance of all homosexuals suffers from the acts of a demented few.

Matthew who teaches drama in an alternative school thinks that all teachers have to cope with sexuality in the classroom. It's just a matter of coping professionally.

MATTHEW: The only pressure I have is the same kind of pressure that I think a straight person would have in a relationship to the opposite sex of the students. And the fact that there's always a sexual factor in any kind of human dealing, and it's up to the individual as well as the protocol of the schools to be able to decide where to draw the line and separate business from personal lives.

MERROW: So, any kind of image of a gay teacher lusting after the young people of the same sex -- you'd reject that outright?

MATTHEW: No. I know of cases where it has happened, and this is the kind of image that is most prominent because it's most evident -- both physically and through word-of-mouth -- but, then, on the other hand, I've seen teachers who are very flamboyant - male teachers I'm thinking of - who do have a lot of success because they're respected. They know their craft, and they have a very good way of teaching and to reach students.

It only becomes a problem when it becomes a preoccupation; in that it can't be separated from the classroom. In that case, I think a person shouldn't teach - no matter what their sexual preference is. But this is something a person should be able to decide for themselves, and they'd find out soon enough just from the contact with the students, and what kind of distance they can maintain, and when they can let go and not be so distant.

PAT: Of course, a man teacher wouldn't know if a boy had a crush on him. It's completely obvious. Because boys cannot express that. They can't say, "I've got a crush on a man." I mean, I think they're in a way, much more oppressed than girls because girls can have a crush on a woman teacher, or on a man teacher, because it's only a crush -- but BOYS! To even admit that they have a crush - watch out! And it's so normal.

MERROW: Not only does Pat think that the student's crush on a teacher is normal, she says that a good teacher - gay or straight - can use it to the student's benefit.

PAT: There's also a point where you want them to work, and you'll try anything you can to get 'em to do it. Oh, really, look. You're cooped up in a class with 30 kids - look, if you're going to have a crush, I'm going to make you work.

The only thing about the teacher model is -- We're not like parents at all. We're not going to chastise them. We're going to

teach them. We try to teach them new things. We try to help them to grow; try new things. Find out a little bit about themselves. Try and push them a little in more positive ways - because they don't live with us, and we don't have to discipline them. I mean, we have to keep them quiet, but we're not going to be there yelling at them all day long. They're not our kids. You know, we go home and leave them. So, while we're there, we try and be as constructive to them, and as loving in a way, and, of course, they're going to have a crush on you. Because, really, you're an ideal person. You love me and you take care of me. And it's a "pedestal" kind of thing. Because kids don't see us as people.

We're there. We take care of them, and then we leave them. We go home, and they never see us after that. They don't see the other half of that.

MERROW: But there is another side. Not every teacher handles a crush professionally. Not every gay teacher keeps his or her distance. Joe is a case in point. Secretly gay, while living in a small town, Joe taught bookkeeping in the local high school.

JOE: I taught for about six years in high school, and it seemed like in the last two of those six years, I met a young boy. I think what my downfall was because I had this one kid in my class, and I got very friendly with him. My opinion is -- He was obviously gay. Not obviously gay in the sense of physically, but emotionally he was gay - even though he was 15 years old. Maybe he thought I was gay, but we struck up a good relationship, and had sex together. And then he would invite some friends over. It grew into a thing with about five young boys, and eventually - still no one knows how - but it came to the attention of the authorities, and being a small town, everyone wanted it hushed up - mainly because of my family and the school. So, they wanted me to finish out the school year, and I submitted my resignation. It was all done very nicely. I had tenure, but, obviously, I was dead wrong. So, I wasn't about to fight it out in court.

I can't say I hold anything against the school because they only did what they had to do. And I think they really only bent over backwards to help me.

I recall an education class in college. It was in Abnormal Psych, and the professor, in looking around the room, said, "If any of you men have a tendency to like young boys, stay away from teaching." I, of course, just don't think that just because a male teacher is a homosexual that he is not a good teacher <u>per se</u>. I think it's just a matter of self-control. I didn't have it. Let's say I had it for four years. I didn't have self-control for two. I think there is the same possibility of a heterosexual male involving some of his female students, and I think it isn't a sexual identity problem. It's just a sexual control problem.

MERROW: Were you a good teacher?

JOE: I'd have to say "yes". The kids liked me. Of course, I taught bookkeeping which was 98% female in my classes - so, that made it a little bit easier without having to stare at the little boys all day long.

MERROW: Looking back on it, Joe, do you suppose anybody else on the faculty was gay?

JOE: Yeah. In that same school right now, out of a total faculty of about 50, right now there are at least 3 definitely gay teachers there. I think a lot of objections to gay teachers is because they're

supposedly child-molesters. I know it's against the law, and it's morally wrong, and if you want to have sex, there are a lot of people over 18 . . . .

MERROW: I really don't know how to ask this question. You say you like young boys. Does that mean that you are still involved sexually with kids who are minors?

JOE: NO! Actually, I don't touch anyone under 18. My current lover is 18, and I've learned my lesson. And I certainly don't involve myself with any straight young boys anymore. There is a place in Boston where one can, if one gets the urge, find 15, 16, 17 year old boys that . . . there aren't any hassles. It isn't a matter of morality - because they're into the whole scene.

MERROW: Joe was a closet-gay, and his secretiveness may have helped bring about his eventual problem. Parents fear teachers like Joe, but some gay teachers say that their students' fear of homosexuality is more of a problem. First, Pat, and then Gladys.

PAT: I could have stayed on, but part of the reason I left was that I did feel the gay oppression. I could not tell the kids - because the kids had a vote in the school, and they could have voted me right out because they don't understand about gayness. I mean, they grow up thinking we're child-molesters. We're wierdos. We're crazy. You know, all we want is their body. And let's be real. I'm 28. I'm not really too much attracted to 16, 18 year old women. I mean, that's just doesn't turn me on.

I like my own age group, for one thing. I like someone who's intelligent, and I really love these kids. I mean, they're like daughters in a lot of ways.

GLADYS: I certainly agree with Pat. I feel just like Pat does. A 15 or 16 year old could in no way interest me as a person that I want to relate to sexually - you know, as a lover or anything like that. When I go home, I want to leave kids behind. I want nothing to do with them. I can't imagine being attracted like that. But gay and straight people oftentimes are attracted to people much younger than them. I mean we read about that in the papers all the time.

And I've been in the position where I've seen another person that I was working with get a crush on a 16 or 15 year old, and I was very interested in how I reacted. I was so nervous and so freaked out - even though I don't think I had, intellectually, any reason to believe that anything would have happened, that would have gotten anyone in trouble - but just hearing this woman say - "Gee, I really like her. She's awfully cute. And, boy, I wish she was a little bit older." This made me so nervous because the whole oppression-trip about gays and teachers has quite sunk into my own head, and not that it made me believe it, but it made me believe that if anything close to that happened, it would be sudden-death for everyone around, everyone involved.

MERROW: Would it have made you as nervous if I had been on your staff, and I had said of a 15 or 16 year old girl - "Gee, I really like her. I'd like to go out with her . . ." and so on?

GLADYS: No, it wouldn't have made me nervous at all. It would have ticked me off, and I'd have gone over and knocked your head off. And said - "Absolutely not! Not on my staff you're not!" See,

that's the thing -- I felt like I was a pretty good director, and I was pretty cool, and I could handle all kinds of very strange things that would come up - and they do, you know, with programs of a high energy level - all kinds of crazy things can happen! - and I was really able to deal with these crazy things. But the only time when it was hard to deal with these things was when something hit me inside.

And I think one of the things about gay teachers is that you're crippled. God forbid that there should ever be a discussion, that the kids would one day say -- "Let's discuss homosexuality in the classroom."

MERROW: But some gay teachers do talk openly with their students. Tom Amiano teaches in San Francisco, where he's a member of the Gay Teachers' Union.

AMIANO: A lot of times there'll be name-calling, like you'll hear "Faggot" on the school playground, and when you investigate it, you'll find that most kids don't really know what that means. They know it's a name, and they know it'll get a reaction, and that's what you can say in a "conflict" situation to another boy, and sometimes they even say it to a girl. So, they're really not quite sure what that means, and it's good to do a little rap then, and like, I wear an earring - which is a kind of statement - and the kids in the 2nd or 3rd grade would say, "Why are you wearing an earring? Are you a girl?" And I'd say, "Well, first of all, no. But being a girl would be okay. And I wear an earring because I want to. Men can wear them, too." It's a direct thing. Because the one thing about kids - you don't want to develop a big thing about what gay lib is, etc. Because that's not what they were asking. You give them an answer to what they are asking. And then another little boy one time said, "Are you a fag because you wear an earring?" You know, real direct. A little bit of antagonism in his voice. And I said, "Well, that's a word I don't like. I'm gay, and that's the word I like better than 'fag', and also, I'm your friend. I've been your friend for a long time." That was it. It took care of that direct need - because he had to ask the question. And, then, he went on to something else.

And, then, the other thing is that really strong myth about gay people around kids - gays are dangerous around kids. If you're gay and you're around kids, the kid will elect to be a gay person. And that isn't true. That hasn't been proven scientifically. My parents were straight, right? And all the people I knew were straight, right? But I didn't elect to become heterosexual. I became homosexual. I don't like the label, and I don't like my sexuality to be an issue. However, there's a real political thing happening out there - so, it makes it necessary for me - and it's my own personal choice - to say, "Yeah, I'm gay." And to also say, "And, that's only a small part of me." But that small part of me - since you want to relate to it in a negative way, then I want to say that I relate to it in a positive way. So, let's negotiate.

If you open up the schools to a lot of different alternatives, then that infers that we would have an open society at one time - where a lot of these things would be acceptable. And that's what really scares people a lot - because they think that traditional things that have been around a long time like the nuclear family, and certain institutions like the churches - those soft parts of our society - well, they feel that they would crumble and become destroyed or weakened. When, actually, it wouldn't be so much that. But they would be changed. And that would happen over a long period

of time, and only when people are comfortable. Now, that's my message. You know, don't do nothin' unless you're comfortable. I would really prefer that every teacher who is in the closet would come out. But I also know that if people are uncomfortable in doing that, they shouldn't do it. But what I say is -- Turn the light on. I mean, it is 1976. Look around the closet a little bit, anyway.

MERROW: "Turn on the light," says Tom Amiano of the San Francisco Gay Teachers' Union. Dr. Frank Kameny, a gay rights activist in Washington, D. C., would be among the first to agree.

KAMENY: One out of ten of those students are gay, and they have an absolute right by any reasonable, moral and ethical standard - and by any rational standards of functioning of a society to have their role models, too. They have a right to have gay people to look up just as any other people do.

I feel there should be open expression of it to the fullest extent that - and in precisely the same way that - heterosexual teachers routinely can do so now, and no more, but no less!

MERROW: Now, you've got to give some examples there.

KAMENY: Okay. In a classroom setting, in which it might be relevant - even as an off-hand remark - to something that's going on in the context of a particular class for a teacher to allude to his or her husband or wife or children - or what my family did this last weekend or something like that . . . this would be considered perfectly routine. If it were not made an issue, and if it were relevant to some discussion in the classroom. I feel that a homosexual teacher ought to be able to do the same thing.

Similarly, heterosexual teachers often wear wedding rings, which is a visible, continuing, on-going declaration of your heterosexuality -- that kind of thing -- and I think that gay teachers have a right to do much the equivalent. Where the subject happens to be specifically relevant to the context of a classroom discussion -- if you have a social studies class, a sex education class, a class perhaps in war, psychology . . . any number of other academic contexts where this would be relevant, then, of course, the subject should be discussed freely, openly, fully - and precisely on par with - not more, but certainly not less - privileged status than heterosexuality is.

MERROW: Dr. Frank Kameny of Washington, D. C. His statistic that one child in ten will be gay is from the Kinsey Report. Kinsey found that one person in ten was more or less exclusively homosexual for at least three years. But only one male out of every 25 is exclusively homosexual throughout his life. And only one female out of every 50 is exclusively homosexual. Kinsey did his studies in the 1940's, and they have not been replicated. The important point to remember is that nobody really knows how many homosexuals there are in the general population or in the schools. So, gays use the larger figure, and the straights use the smaller number.

But whatever the numbers, there are gay students, and Dr. Kameny wants them to have openly gay teachers as positive role models. Dr. Herbert Hendin worries about the children who are confused and uncertain about their sexuality. They need strong heterosexual role models and so he contends they should not have openly homosexual teachers.

HENDIN: We're seeing increasing numbers of youngsters who go through all of their adolescence unsure of who or what they are, and very much affected by the social pressures and social institutions and the attitudes of their peers and their teachers. So, I think that you will affect a significant percentage of marginal people. There will be some people who are going to go in that direction in any case. There will be some people who are going to be heterosexual - a large percentage, and I don't think the contact with the teacher will matter.

But I think there is a significant percentage - and much more than we used to see - of people who are just unsure about their sexual identity, and I think, too, that they have, if you will, rights that have to be protected, and that have to be weighed in that situation.

Now, I, myself, think it's potentially a bad influence on the small percentage of children who are, to me, as important as the small percentage of homosexuals who need to put forward that piece of information. There are some people who need to project what they are sexually.

You do have an impact of social acceptance of an alternative. I happen to feel that the homosexual way of life - given an individual who was on the border line - he would lead a happier life if he didn't move that way. Most professionals feel that way. And we come at it from that clinical experience. My own experience has also been with homosexuals who aren't patients, and I'm convinced of it more so having seen those people who say they're reasonably satisfied or happy with the homosexual life. But I would say that virtually all of them - if they had a wish or choice - would wish it otherwise.

MERROW: Dr. Herbert Hendin, author of "The Age of Sensation". Doctors Kameny and Hendin focus on two different groups of children. Kameny on those who are going to be homosexual - and Hendin on the sexually uncertain. Just what happens to children who are, or who are going to be, homosexual? Joe, the teacher who was fired for his illicit involvement with young, high school age boys hinted at the seamy underside of the question when he talked about the places in Boston where young boys are available for sex.

That's a phenomenon in every big city - a place they call the "Meat Market" on the street. The young boys are called the "chicken". Of course, not every gay youth goes that route. But those who do often go on to worse activities - including hard drugs - and they're usually washed up - no longer attractive at age 17 or 18.

YOUNG MAN: I was getting too much, and I got put away for nine months in a drug rehabilitation center. They caught me dealing, and I got kicked out, got put away, ran away from home - this was like when I was 14 or 15. I met this guy, and I said, "Hey, I want to meet some more gay people." You know, I'd never saw no gay people, and the only way I could see any gay people that were like me is go to a bar. So, I went to a bar, and that's what I've been doing ever since - because that's the only place I can see gay people.

MERROW: Were you hustling in the bars?

YOUNG MAN: This summer I was a go-go boy, in the "Combat Zone". It's where all the trashy places are - all kinds of "X-Rated" movies and stuff like that. And I needed a job, and I was 16 at the time, and I just went in and applied, and I had to try out.

And I tried out. And they had me, like, hustling drinks, and I got a quarter for every drink I hustled. And then I started hustling people and stuff like that because I needed the extra cash. And no one would hire me. There's no places for - like, especially young gay youth to go to.

And when the first come into Boston, you know, the first thing they see is - they got down, like, the Block, the Greyhound, where is the place where most of the hustlers hustle. And they think - "Well, I'm young and all the kids my age hustle. So, I might as well hustle."

YOUNG WOMAN: I came out to my parents about a year ago, and they were openly hostile. I left home a couple of different times, went through living in a lot of different places, still trying to work out some of my feelings, and my parents' feelings in relation to my gayness.

MERROW: How come you left school?

YOUNG MAN: Well, it ended up like so I would be kind of "closety" myself. And around the kids I had to be like the rest of them. Doing stuff like burning the desk or throwing books out the windows or something like that.

MERROW: How about teachers? Were there gay teachers in the school?

YOUNG MAN: Yeah. There was a few, and, like, a few of them - like, I stayed after school and be the only one there, and, like, they have asked me questions, what have you -- what I do after school. Because they knew I wasn't like the rest of the kids. And they asked me, and so I'd just tell them -- I go downtown and I hustle. And, like, I've turned a few, and what have you, and it's regular every week.

MERROW: "Turned a few" . . .

YOUNG MAN: Teachers.

YOUNG WOMAN: I came out to a few other friends who sort of weren't openly hostile, but I saw them sort of pulling away, and eventually the friendships sort of just lapsed. It was still the fear that someone else might know and suspect them. That's most of it with high school kids.

YOUNG MAN: The time I got arrested in "drag" I was in the jail cell all night in those clothes. The next day I had to go in this big room with all these men in "drag", and, like, I just sat off in a corner by myself with my head down. I mean, the make-up was just like all over my face from crying. And one of the men stood up and said to me, "Honey, where's your pimp?" And, like, I really didn't want them to know that I wasn't a woman. I mean, I was stuffed and everything, you know. A lot of people tell me that you really couldn't tell the difference. I looked like Liza Minelli in "drag". So, I sort of played along and I said, "He'll be around sometime, I hope." And he said, "Well, if he don't get you out, baby, I'll bail you out, and you can come work for me." And I said, "Yeah, sure."

So, finally, I was using a false name, also. Finally, when the man came in and called out - he yelled out, "Wind." Like, I stood up and said, "Here I am." And all the men looked at me and said, "It's a guy!" My mother was there, but she said she didn't

want to see me. That same night I went right back to hustling again.

MERROW: How come you dropped out?

YOUNG MAN: Just because I didn't like it. I didn't feel there was any education going on. All of the kids were just flying all over the place. Once I remember this lady substitute-teacher we had from Math and she was really young, and all the kids were really going after her, and they were pulling up her dress, and it was just crazy.

MERROW: How about other gay kids?

YOUNG MAN: There was one that I think was gay. He used to sit and look at me all the time, and stare and stare at me, and he never stopped. And one day he asked me if he could borrow my pencil. So, I gave him my pencil. And he came back and he gave the pencil back to me. Then he came up to me and took the pencil from me again, and said, "I want to use it for a minute." And then when he came back and brought it back, he dropped it on the desk, and his hand kind of went down my back. And it was just really strange because I turned really red, and the teacher looked at me: "What's wrong?" I said, "Nothing. Everything's fine."

YOUNG WOMAN: I came out to a few close friends who I had sort of tested prior to my coming out to them on gay issues, and just talking in general about gay issues. And so the people I came out to I was fairly certain would be supportive, which they were. And it's just now progressed to a point with my parents where it's no longer the issue, and they're starting to focus on other parts of things that I'm doing, other parts of my life.

YOUNG MAN: I'd say in the gay world there's a lot of trouble, okay, with people having sex young. When they say, like, "I'm gay", or something like that - that means I should run right out and have sex. That's what I did, and I was like, okay, a whore. I just went out and got it all the time. And that's the way I thought it was supposed to be, and then I started to get into relationships and now it's more like I only go out with one person at a time, just normal. Like a stereotyped straight relationship. We go out to movies. I don't go out to the bars that much no more. It's just a regular relationship - spaghetti and wine and the whole bit. It's romantic. And I stick to one person.

MERROW: Not every gay kid hustles in bars or lives a life of spaghetti and wine. For the majority, being gay and adolescent means loneliness. To everyone else, John was straight. He had a girlfriend and was on the track team.

JOHN: Obviously, there were probably many other gay kids who were in the same situation that I was in. And not really knowing who to go to, and it's a very lonely feeling. You can't confide in anybody else. Sometimes it can lead to suicide. There have been lots of kids who have killed themselves, and I entertained the idea a couple of times myself. But I was hoping that one day I would meet some people and just start my life all over again.

MERROW: When you realized that you were a homosexual, did you accept that?

JOHN: No. I thought of it as a sickness for a while, and many times when I had anxiety and just plagued by the fact that society thinks that it is sick - and at that time all the books that were out on homosexuality were by psychiatrists who thought that being gay was sick.

MERROW: Were there any gay teachers?

JOHN: There were a couple, and I sort of suspected one of my teachers to be gay, and after a few months of debating I finally came out to her, and since that time we've had a really good relationship. She's helped me out with a lot of problems. I was really lucky to find her.

MERROW: She's not openly gay, then.

JOHN: The whole faculty knows it. But it's kept quiet. There are a lot of people on her side, and the people who dislike her are the minority. So, there's really nothing that they can do. There are a number of legal ways to get her thrown out. And she happens to be one of the better teachers in the school, and, yet, if a group of parents did find out about her, they could easily have her thrown out.

MERROW: How was she helpful to you?

JOHN: Well, she was somebody to talk to, and someone who took me around to different places where gay people got together. And she was helpful to me in dealing with my parents. And showing my parents that I was not sick, and that I could lead a normal life.

MERROW: So, your parents now know. How did they react?

JOHN: Well, neither of them actually accepted it. My father thinks it's a stage that I'm going through, and that I'll eventually grow out of it. And my mother thinks that I can't be totally interested in men; that there will be times when I'll get involved with women. So, she thinks I'm bisexual - instead of thoroughly gay. So, I pleased her by saying that I do really know where I'm at.

MERROW: What are their feelings about the teacher who helped you? Do they feel she helped you, or are they angry at her?

JOHN: The thing is they don't know that she is gay. But they said it was really good that she was there because I could talk to her. And my parents felt bad that I could not talk with them, but they could understand the aggravation and the problems I had to go through.

I don't think I could have approached a male gay teacher for the simple fact that he's a male, and that could lead to problems if anybody else found out. Rumors could startthat him and I were getting involved with each other, and he could be fired, and put in jail.

MERROW: John, how should schools respond to gay kids?

JOHN: Well, there isn't really any response at all - which is bad for the gay adolescent. And there probably won't be any response at all. It's still something that cannot be brought out into the open because parents feel that it's something "hush-hush" and the school cannot deal with the problem until parents say it's okay.

MERROW: In the meantime, there aren't many safe places for gay youth. One of the few "sanctuaries" is Project Lambda, a gay coffee-house for young people in Boston. The Rev. Randall Gibson, a Unitarian minister, is co-director of the project.

GIBSON: Being gay, as a 14, 15, 16 year old can be a real hazard to your health. And if it is, you've got a real problem. I had a call this morning from a youngster from a city nearby who's run away from home at 13 1/2. He's gay. His parents will not accept it. And he has no alternative for himself, but to run away. I told him that that's not a solution. Because no matter where he goes, he'll be found. And when he's found, he'll be set up in court, and the judge will say -- "You have to do what your parents want you to do." And until he's 18, that's exactly what's going to happen to him. They'll assign him to a foster home. They'll perhaps make him go to some type of school - where the goal will be to make him a nice kid like all the other kids in our society.

Now, the fact of the matter is, and I think for some kids you can do that -- that is, behavior modification will indeed affect the behavior patterns of certain youth who are in their sexual acting-out trying to hurt parents, trying to inflict pain on authority figures by saying -- "Guess what? Mom & Dad, you think I can't hurt you anymore, but I can. I happen to be a member of Young Faggots of America!" And that's one way of inflicting a lot of pain.

MERROW: What does a young homosexual kid do when he or she finds that the school is not supportive - or, in fact, is a really alienating and harmful atmosphere? Do they drop out?

GIBSON: Probably if they're a young man, the pressure to drop out is much greater. Young lesbians do not have the same kind of visibility that young homosexual males have. If a young woman doesn't want to go along with some of the dress standards of her peer group, she might dress with sneakers and jeans and a T-shirt, which would not label her in our society as being a lesbian. It might label her as being a tom-boy, but that's something that young men find very desirable. So, she can get by without being very visible. But if a young man sees himself as being homosexual, and doesn't take some action to give visible substance to that reality for him - then what happens to him if he puts on a pair of earrings, for example? This becomes a really acute problem. Or if he wears platform shoes, or if he carries a handbag -- or he may find himself using some kind of cosmetics.

We've discovered, as a matter of fact, in connection with that that gay teachers in school are apt to be even more hostile to gay youth that they identify in the student population because of the threat that they pose to them. At a meeting that we went to at a local school not too long ago, it was clear to us that one of the men who was participating in that meeting was a gay male, but he was so hostile and so afraid that he became an extremely difficult person to deal with in that small conference of teachers. We run into this all the time, and that can become a part of a kind of "acting-out" trip where the person actually becomes homophobic and violent about gay people. His or her own self hatred becomes an obstacle to any kind of objectivity.

MERROW: Okay. How does a teacher "act-out" that greater hostility that he or she feels toward gay students?

GIBSON: By being tougher on them. They can be much more rigorous in terms of appraising their work. They can place much higher demands on them, or they can be much more rejecting. Provide them with very little support. Refuse to see them after school to give them some private tutoring, for example, which they would do for another student in the school. In very many small ways, they can make a homosexual youth feel extremely uncomfortable -- primarily out of their own fear of being exposed as a gay person.

Moreover, they don't want it to be rumored around that school that a certain kid who is known to be gay is hanging out with them. And so they will take great pains to make sure that there's no way that that young homosexual person is going to be identified with them as a homosexual adult.

MERROW: Are you sympathetic, though, to parents who might fear, for example, having gay teachers -- they may be lusting after the children and molesting them and that sort of thing? Can you understand parents feeling that way?

GIBSON: I can understand it, but I can only respond by saying to that they'd better understand that for the last 2,000 years some fraction of their kids have been taught by homosexual people - without any problem at all. In fact, I think it would be a surprise for most parents to know that probably one out of ten of the teachers that taught their kids during the time they were in grade school, grammar school, and high school were gay people.

MERROW: There are an awful lot of gay kids - or kids who may think they're gay, or fear they're gay - some of whom might be listening. What would you tell them to do since they're apparently not able to get the support from the schools - and perhaps from their own home?

GIBSON: I really don't have much advice for them. There really isn't much they can do. They're going to have to go on living in the same kind of torture and in the totally painful way that they have in the past. Bars are a terrible place for a young person to grow up, but until our society gets to be at the point where it can be a little more civilized, that's the place that the young people will go.

MERROW: The Reverend Randall Gibson, Co-Director of a project for gay youth in Boston. Most cities don't have such places. Few schools offer counseling for sexually uncertain youth -straight or gay-- and few school officials are likely to advocate changing the status quo. Generally, the school superintendents and principals we questioned wouldn't even discuss it. One superintendent said simply, "Turn that tape recorder off." The American Association of School Administrators, the superintendents' professional organization, does not have an official position on homosexuality in the schools, although that group's executive director admits to a strongly held personal opinion that openly homosexual teachers do not belong in the schools.

California's popularly elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Wilson Riles, did address the issue.

RILES: I guess you're talking about a "due process" situation here. And it's a very emotional one. I presume that if a gay person is a teacher, we'll have to accept it because of our laws. I don't think we have to accept gay teachers who are advocates of gay behavior.

MERROW: Heterosexual teachers don't have to operate under those conditions, though. Heterosexual teachers can, if you will, flaunt their heterosexuality.

RILES: I would hope that that would not be done either. Certainly I would not ask about the sexual behavior of a perspective teacher. I would have some grave concern about a teacher who came to apply and then announced their sexual behavior. I would think that we ought to take a hard look at that person - whether it was heterosexual or homosexual. We have enough to do - in just the teaching of youngsters - without getting into this whole sex education business, and I'm willing to let the parents and the churches handle this - unless the parents want the schools to do it, and that's the way we handle it in California.

MERROW: Our look at homosexuality in the schools indicates that most school officials will continue to pretend not to notice the presence of gay teachers on their staffs. Under the circumstances, looking the other way may be the pragmatic and human thing for them to do. Public acknowledgment would be contrued as approval, which might very well jeopardize the administrators' own jobs. Homosexual teachers like Joe Acanfora or Jack, the fourth grade teacher who lost his job, know that coming out of the closet puts their professional careers in jeopardy, even though the law is on their side. But homosexuals stay in the closet at great personal cost. The heterosexual majority is probably willing to continue this "damned if you do, damned if you don't" existence for the homosexual minority, since the alternative--public acceptance of homosexuality--requires a change in the status quo. But the status quo will be difficult to maintain. Our investigation has left us convinced that homosexuality--and sexuality generally--cannot be kept out of school by refusing to talk about it, or by saying, "leave it to the family and church." Sexual segregation may be politically popular, but the Kinsey Report told us that at least four percent of the population is homosexual. That means that almost all of us had, or now have, gay teachers and gay classmates. Did it matter then? Does it matter now? Of course society has a strong stake in heterosexuality, but surely there must be room for counseling and for psychological support services for children who are gay or sexually uncertain. Right now, their alternatives include the "meat market," sexual excess, disease, dangerous drugs, self-hatred, isolation and oppression. It doesn't have to be that way. This is John Merrow.

WOMAN: I was on a bus one day near the high school where we live, and there were two high school girls sitting behind me, and they were talking about this kid, Paul. And one said to the other, "You know, Paul does things -- like he says, 'Oh, isn't that boy cute?' and then all of a sudden, he says, 'No, no. I don't mean that.'" And the other one said, "Well, he's a faggot." And the other one said, "But he must really have trouble with it, or feel oppressed or something because one minute he is and the other minute he's not, and he tells you he is, and then he tells you he's not . . ." And I couldn't catch the rest of the conversation, but it made me feel like I wanted to go out and grab three gay people off the street and RUN - RUN - literally, up to that high school, get up on the stage, call an auditorium assembly, and tell them about gay life. Just for that one kid. This kid is struggling and who's going to be there for him? Who's going to tell him - "Hey, I know what it's like and it's rough, but if that's the way that you really feel inside, it's okay - because there are millions of us, and we're all the same."

MERROW: This program was prepared by John Merrow and Tom Steward. Contributors were Reporters Robert Nathan in New York, David Freudberg in Boston, and Rose Tobin in San Francisco.

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RESOURCE LIST

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